

Message Text

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PAGE 01 HONG K 09578 241024Z

47 41

ACTION EA-14

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DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03

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R 240915Z SEP 73

FM AMCONSUL HONG KONG

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8266

INFO USLO PEKING

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC HONOLULU HI

C O N F I D E N T I A L HONG KONG 9578

NOFORN

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

EO 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJ: PRC CONCERN FOR POPULATION GROWTH

REF: HONG KONG 9579

SUMMARY. AN NCNA ASSERTATION THAT THE PRC HAS ITS POPULATION GROWTH UNDER PLANNED CONTROL MASKS EVIDENCE OF RENEWED CONCERN AND EFFORTS TO DEAL WITH THE PROBLEM. END SUMMARY

1. NCNA'S SEPTEMBER 23 ARTICLE DISPUTING ANY NEED FOR THE PRC TO MAKE FURTHER EFFORTS IN BIRTH CONTROL REFLECTS SENSITIVITY TO FOREIGN SPECULATION ABOUT CHINA'S INTERLINKING PROBLEMS OF AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION AND POPULATION GROWTH. JUDGING FROM
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PAGE 02 HONG K 09578 241024Z

FOREIGN PRESS REPORTS, THE ARTICLE WAS FIRST PUBLISHED BY NCNA

SEPTEMBER 20 IN FRENCH ONLY, WHICH COULD INDICATE THAT IT WAS ORIGINALLY INTENDED FOR BACKGROUND USE IN CONNECTION WITH FRENCH PRESIDENT POMPIDOU'S VISIT, OR FOR THE WHO FERTILITY DRUG CONFERENCE IN GENEVA, IN WHICH A DELEGATION FROM THE PRC'S TOP BIRTH CONTROL ORGANIZATION IS PARTICIPATING (HONG KONG 9420). BEHIND THE ARTICLE'S MASK, HOWEVER, LIES GENUINE CONCERN FOR THE NARROW MARGIN BETWEEN THE GROWTH IN CHINA'S FOOD PRODUCTION AND THE INCREASE IN THE MOUTHS TO BE FED.

2. THE ARTICLE'S MAIN ASSERTATION IS THAT THE PRC'S GRAIN PRODUCTION HAS MORE THAN DOUBLED SINCE 1949, WHILE THE POPULATION ROSE LITTLE MORE THAN 50 PERCENT AND HAS "TOPPED 700 MILLION." THE VAGUENESS OF THE LATTER FIGURE IS PARTICULARLY NOTEWORTHY IN LIGHT OF MOUNTING EVIDENCE THAT THE PRC RECENTLY CARRIED OUT A CENSUS CHECK, AT LEAST OF ITS URBAN POPULATION. MOREOVER, THE REGIME THIS YEAR HAS MOUNTED A SERIES OF RELATIVELY STIFF MEASURES TO DEAL WITH THE FOOD-POPULATION PROBLEM IN THE CITIES. SOME REPORTS OF A CENSUS DATE THE EVENT BACK TO AUGUST 1972. HOWEVER, TRAVELERS REPORTED SEEING CENSUS POSTERS IN SHANGHAI IN JANUARY THIS YEAR (HONG KONG 0344, WR 2). RECENT IMMIGRANTS TO HONG KONG REPORT HOUSEHOLD REGISTRATION CHECKS IN WIDELY SCATTERED URBAN AREAS EARLY THIS YEAR: HUPEI, JANUARY; SHANGHAI, FEBRUARY; KWANGTUNG, MARCH. THE SOURCES BELIEVE, OR CLAIM INFORMATION, THAT THIS WAS A DISGUISED NATIONWIDE CENSUS (OIR 10005 10008/2; 1967/3). A RECENT LETTER WRITER REFERRED TO THE INTERNAL USE WITHIN THE PRC OF A POPULATION FIGURE OF ONE BILLION, PRESUMABLY A PROJECTION FOR THE FORESEEABLE FUTURE, AND SUCH A FIGURE COULD COME FROM A CENSUS, EVEN A PARTIAL ONE.

3. ONE OF THE IMMIGRANT SOURCES DESCRIBED A BRIEFING IN DECEMBER LAST YEAR AT WHICH A REPORT ON THE PRC ECONOMY IN 1972, SAID TO HAVE BEEN PREPARED BY STATE PLANNING COMMISSION CHIEF YU CHIU-LI, WAS READ OUT. THE REPORT AS DESCRIBED TOUCHED ON ADVERSE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE ALREADY BROADLY FAMILIAR FROM OTHER SOURCES (SEE HONG KONG 7705): THE NUMBER OF INDUSTRIAL WORKERS 50 MILLION, FAR EXCEEDED THE ECONOMIC PLAN, AS DID THE TOTAL WAGES PAID THEM AND THE AMOUNT OF FOOD CONSUMED IN URBAN AREAS. SIGNIFICANTLY, A THOROUGH CHECK ON URBAN HOUSEHOLD REGISTRATION WAS AMONG THE CORRECTIVE MEASURES CALLED FOR BY YU. THE SOURCE UNDERSTOOD THAT THIS WAS TO PROVIDE ACCURATE INFORMATION TO CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 HONG K 09578 241024Z

FACILITATE PLANNING. YU BLAMED THE UNDESIRABLE STATE OF AFFAIRS ON MISINTERPRETATION OF CENTRAL POLICY, WHICH LED TO UNDUE STRESS ON EXPENDING LOCAL INDUSTRIES (OIR 1967/3). ADMISSION BY PLANNER LI FU-CHUN OF ERROR IN PROJECTING INDUSTRIAL JOBS, AND HIS RESULTING RESIGNATION, WERE REPORTED EARLIER (HONG KONG 7367).

4. THUS FAR, WE DO NOT HAVE COMPARABLE EVIDENCE OF A CENSUS CHECK HAVING BEEN CONDUCTED IN THE RURAL AREAS WHERE THE VAST MAJORITY

OF THE POPULATION IS LOCATED. WHAT EMERGES FROM THE INCOMPLETE INFORMATION AVAILABLE IS THAT THE CITIES ARE THE PARTICULAR FOCUS OF CONCERN. INCREASED EFFORTS TO SEND YOUTH AND OTHERS TO THE COUNTRYSIDE REMAIN VERY MUCH IN EVIDENCE DESPITE SERIOUS TROUBLES WHICH ARE BEING ENCOUNTERED (HONG KONG 9528). BIRTH CONTROL MEASURES, WITH A NEW PUSH BEHIND THEM THIS YEAR, APPEAR TO EXTEND TO THE COUNTRYSIDE AS WELL, ALTHOUGH IN THAT CONNECTION, THE NCNA ARTICLE STATED THAT IT WAS (STILL) PRC POLICY TO ENCOURAGE POPULATION GROWTH IN SPARSELY POPULATED AREAS AND AMONG THE MINORITIES. THIS MAY BE EYEWASH. BUT IN LIGHT OF THE OTHER EVIDENCE IT SEEMS REASONABLE TO CONCLUDE THAT THE PRC, FOR THE PRESENT, IS ABOVE ALL CONCERNED WITH REDUCING URBAN OVER-POPULATION, BUT THAT GENERAL POPULATION GROWTH IS IN CLOSE SECOND PLACE.

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